BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Sam Liau, 72, businessman, landowner, and former storekeeper

> *"Y.K. Aiona Store. In fact, we were the biggest store in Kona. . . . We sold shoes, we sold dresses, we sold material, horseshoes, Chinese groceries. Everything you can imagine. . . . The store had benches outside. That was sort of a village center. They'd bring their guitars and ukuleles, and they'd play their music. . . . On Sundays, we had more people, because the church is right across. . . . They'd come over, and before going home, they'd all line up on the porch."*

Sam Liau, son of Kim Lin and Liau Tin Lung (also known as Y.K. Aiona), was born on January 13, 1908, in Hookena, Kona, Hawaii. He began his education at Hookena Elementary School and continued in Honolulu where he graduated from St. Louis College in 1931.

Shortly after graduation, Sam returned to Hookena to help with the various Y.K. Aiona enterprises, including a store, gasoline station, poi factory, coffee lands, and coffee mill. In 1938, he opened two retail liquor outlets and two bars. With the help of his wife, Ella, he also operated the Kona Meat Market during the war years.

After World War II, Sam closed his liquor business and began concentrating on real estate dealings in Kailua-Kona and Kainaliu. A member of the Kainaliu Kumiai and charter member of both the Kona Lions Club and Rotary, he still maintains an interest in real estate development. He also nurtures his talents in gourmet cooking, cartooning, and painting.

Tape No. 9-14-1-80

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Samuel Liau (SL)

November 12, 1980

Captain Cook, Kona, Hawaii

BY: Michiko Kodama (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Sam Liau at his home in Captain Cook, Kona, Hawaii. Today is November 12, 1980.

Okay, Mr. Liau. Can you first tell me what your father's name was?

SL: My father's name was Liau Tin Lung. He was also known here--the Hawaiians called him Y.K. Aiona.

MK: How did he get that name?

SL: Well, as you know, the Hawaiians had that phonetic [system], or whatever. Like, sometimes, they always end with an "a," within the "Akona," "Ahuna," "Apana," and all that. You see? And I don't know how they come about it, but, you know, once you told me about it, I think. Yes, had that.

MK: That's why, people here sometimes refer to you as Aiona and sometimes refer to you as Liau?

SL: Yes, yes. Sam Aiona, see. But, gradually, I eliminated that. Nobody calls me that anymore. [They call me] Sam Liau. But my name is Y.L. Liau. You know, the actual birth name is Yuk Lin Liau. And it's entered in my documents--birth certificate. And whatever I do--checking, everything--is Y.L. Liau for short. Like in everything--deeds and documents, sale of land--it comes under Yuk Lin Liau. Y-U-K L-I-N L-I-A-U.

MK: Your father, can you tell me when he came to Hawaii?

SL: I think he came in the 1890s with a group of sugar workers.

MK: Do you remember which plantation he may have gone to?

SL: I do not recall, but he landed in Kohala with quite a few Chinese there. They settled there for a while. Do you know Chinn Ho? You know, the big capitalist? He [SL's father] and Chinn Ho's father

were very good friends. Because, I recall, he used to write letters to them. The old Chinese, they used to write letters. So, he came along with that group--few others.

MK: Where did he come from? What part of China?

SL: He said Hong Kong.

MK: Do you remember anything else about his background that he may have told you?

SL: No, not necessarily. You know, he doesn't converse with me, because most of the time I was in school and getting along in my business, you see. I made a trip to Hong Kong, but he did not give me any papers or some kind of family identification. Because the ancestral grounds, you know. But, anyway, he said he was in Hong Kong.

I took a trip up the coast of Hong Kong. I don't quite remember the island there. They were celebrating the--well, the Chinese call it "Chin Mai." [SL may be referring to Ch'ing Ming, a family memorial service held in the spring.] It's a sort of memorial day. They hold it in Honolulu twice a year, too, where they have the priests and people getting together. But now, the Chinese are just going little by little--the older generation, and the young ones don't keep it up. Their old traditions are already all gone. There's no traditions. Well, everybody's so modern that they can't be bothered. I think the Japanese have that same thing, too.

MK: So, when you went Hong Kong, there was that memorial celebration . . .

SL: Yes, then I went there. They have the Feast of the Buns in Cheong Chau. It was quite interesting. There was nothing to do. That time, I paid homage to him [SL's father]. I went to this little temple. There were priests gathering. I just burned some incense. Somewhere in Hong Kong, at least anyway, I paid homage to his ancestral grounds.

MK: When did your father pass away?

SL: In 1944. He was a tailor when he first came. I don't know what he did prior to that. But he had a little tailor shop and a little store where Hookena Beach is now. And Hookena was quite a village. At that time, (it) was bigger than Kailua. The ships used to come in. They had quite a bit prominent Hawaiians. In fact, some of the ali'is used to live around there.

MK: When did you father first come to Kona?

SL: I don't remember, but along that line, I don't think he stayed very long in Kohala.

MK: So, he could have come to Kona, say, maybe 1890s . . .

SL: I was born in 1908.

MK: So, he came, maybe, at the turn of the century?

SL: Yes, I think so. Eighteen ninety, as I told you.

MK: Can you please tell me your exact birthdate?

SL: Yes, January 13, 1908.

MK: And where were you born?

SL: I was born in Hookena.

MK: And your mother's name?

SL: Kim Lin Aiona.

MK: I think, last time, you told me that your mother was not from China, but Hawaii-born?

SL: Yes, Hawaii-born. Her mother was Kim Lin Lau, and they knew her [SL's mother] as Kim Lin. In fact, the Hawaiians down there used to call her Amoi. That is the local phrase for a local person--I mean, for a Chinese. Everyone's Amoi. Amoi Aiona.

MK: I believe he comes with some background in businesses, in the sense that your mother's father was once a merchant.

SL: Yes, he was. Even to this present day, should you mention his name, L. Ahleong, they still remember him as a very well-known merchant.

MK: What do you remember about that grandfather?

SL: Oh, he was very industrious. The old Chinese were very frugal, too. They had a store in King Street. Well, he had several sons. He had several wives, too. In China, they allowed concubines. So, he had about two, three wives. It's quite amusing. In one house, he'd have two or three of the wives living together. Each one had their own room with the kids and all. I have lot of half-uncles. My mother's side is very big. They came out very prominently.

MK: What business was your grandfather in?

SL: In the merchandise business. In the grocery store. So, we also had a grocery store. So, my father used to buy all the groceries from him wholesale.

MK: Your father ran his store in Hookena?

SL: Yes, yes. From Hookena, then he moved up to that area. Now they

call it Kaimalino? Kealia? Right up.

MK: You were born in Hookena. And I know that later on, you went on to schooling in Honolulu.

SL: Yes, I did.

MK: But before we get into that section of your life, I think I'd like to know a little bit about your early life in the Hookena area. First of all, I'd like to know why your father moved to Kona. If you have any inkling as to why he . . .

SL: Well, all the Chinese always want to have their own little business. Most of them start with little grocery stores. The same thing with the Japanese, too. You know, they get a old store, and they branch out. And, you know, eventually, now you'd find the sons are all big supermarket owners. They [original storeowners] gave them a start. It's (a) quite well-known fact that the old people laid the background for all that. And the Chinese, too. The Orientals are very industrial people. At times, they were frugal, but one thing they always did--the Orientals and the Chinese mostly give their sons education. More than anything else. Education was an important, basic value in their lives. It didn't matter anything else, as long as they got that. Well, sometimes you read of a family where three, four sons are lawyers and doctors. The old people sacrificed quite a bit.

MK: When you were a child in Hookena . . .

SL: I attended a little school down there--a little Hookena school. (It) was an elementary school. I stayed there about two years.

MK: At that time, when you were a child, how many children were in your family?

SL: I had a sister I don't remember, but she died. And then, I have another sister that's retired now in Honolulu. Mrs. Carrol--Ellen Carrol.

MK: What number were you in terms of age?

SL: [SL misinterprets question.] [I was here in Kona] right up to the time before I left Honolulu up till about nine [years of age].

MK: Were you a, say, second child?

SL: No, I was the first--the oldest. And the second one died. And then, my sister.

MK: Before you left for Honolulu when you were nine years old, what do you remember about . . .

SL: Oh, the childhood days?

MK: Yeah. Especially the town area itself. Try to describe it for me.

SL: Well, in all these rural areas, the roads were bad, and there were no facilities. You know, the old days. But I guess we live along with the times. Of course, my grandchildren would not be able to see the background, because that's another generation again.

MK: What sort of buildings were in Hookena?

SL: All wooden buildings. Yes. There weren't big structures.

MK: Was there any one section of Hookena that made up a little town?

SL: Oh, yes. They had the post office and the landing--the wharf. In fact, the wharf is still there. Ships used to come in all the time. Maybe once a week.

MK: What kind of items did they load and unload from Hookena?

SL: Oh, groceries and cattle. Shipping cattle. Bringing in foodstuffs, and the mail is coming in once a week. In fact, the postmaster there was a Lincoln. He was a relative of Abraham Lincoln. He [postmaster] has a son, here, too. Arthur Lincoln. He lives right in Keokea, in Honaunau, rather; right near by. He has a home there. Lincoln ran the post office and the coffee mill.

MK: Do you remember the name of the coffee mill he ran?

SL: I don't know. Maybe Lincoln's Coffee Mill. He married a Hawaiian woman.

MK: Were there other coffee mills in that Hookena area?

SL: Yes. Gradually, we operated a coffee mill. And we took all the coffee in quite a vast area from way down. From quite aways. Right up to Honaunau. We'd go and pick up all the coffee. We had the coffee mill. Well, we'd grind the coffee. And wash it, soak it, and dry it. We used to have the Hawaiian ladies come in, sorting out the coffee. Now, everything is electronic. You know, the beans would be just here and there. You have prime, and good, and bad, and fair. They used to have a box--sort of in a cracker box style. They used to sort out the coffee. In turn, instead of paying them, we would exchange for groceries. These Hawaiian women with all their children would sit there, and I come and look at the coffee. Or my father would come in, and then he'd look at the coffee. Then we'd put it in bags--100-pound bags. And rent an old truck, and we'd fill up exactly a hundred pounds (bags). Then, we take it down to the wharf, down Napoopoo, and then we ship it all the way to San Francisco.

MK: Why is it that you didn't just take it down to the port at Hookena?

SL: Well, they didn't have the facilities for that. So, we took it down to Napoopoo.

MK: The mill that you're referring to was known as the Y.K. Aiona . . .

SL: Store, yes.

MK: What other businesses and facilities did . . .

SL: Oh, at that time? Oh, yes. We had a poi shop. My father had--way up in the hills, above there--he had people planting taro. It was quite interesting. They had lean-to shacks. Sometimes, I spend the night or two way up in the hills with him. It's quite a large acreage of taro. He ask some of his old Chinese friends to come over. That, from Kohala, I think. And they used to come. So, there were quite a few Chinese. In fact, there were three or four Chinese stores in that area there. And so competitive. I don't know, but they were, oh, just quite aways apart. They sold things, so they got aggressive. But we were the more aggressive, I think.

And the poi shop is quite interesting. My mother did work hard. There's a big vat. We used to sort the taro out. We put 'em in a cooker--a big wooden cooker. It's almost like a furo. It's redwood. Then, he'd throw in the taro and all. Put the big ones below, the small ones there, covered it up with burlap. It's something like imu.

In fact, they used to do that, later on, when they were making laulau. They used to put 'em in those big imus, instead of putting it underground. Then, they steam it. Like [if] any schools, later, wanted to make some laulau for sales, well, they go to these poi shops. Put (it) in there; (and) they steam it.

Used to get up about 4 o'clock in the morning and cook it. And then, we'd start peeling the taro. We got these old, Hawaiian ladies and men that we'd get there. Put the bucket in front of you. We get this taro. Then, we had to peel it by hand. Small ones, big ones, you know. Or you can take one of these 'opihi shells, and just scrape it up, and put it there. Then, you put (it) on the table. You have to chop it in little pieces. Then, you put 'em in the grinder. That's something like a hamburger grinder. It has ample [space]. Then, you take a stick; you poke it through. Then, it [grinder] makes the poi.

Then, later on, it [poi] comes in a barrel, and it goes to a big board. In fact, I have the board here, too, yet. It's a koa board. There's a lot of memories. My mother would walu, the Hawaiians call it. Then, you mix it with more water. Then, you put it in the barrel. You have a scale right there. You would sell it. The Hawaiians would come with a poi bag, and you would

dip it. [You would measure out] how much poi they want. Oh, was very cheap. At the rate it is now, you know, one pound, $1.75. If you eat poi. I know it's $1.75. Oh, I think, was ten cents a pound back then. A ten-pound bag would cost you a dollar only. That's ample.

MK: About what year was that--ten cents a pound?

SL: Oh, 1920s up to 1930s. Food was really cheap. As I see here [in ESOHP's Stores and Storekeepers of Paia and Puunene, Maui], they were asking how much was a bag of rice and can goods. It was really amazing. So, we had a store that was really quite interesting. Sometimes, I like to recall. I would like to sit down, and, sometimes, I'm urged to write a book.

MK: I think, later on in this interview, I'll ask you more details about your parents' store, and coffee mill, and poi factory . . .

SL: And then, also, we had the service station, too. In the old days, we used to pump it [gasoline] like that. By hand. Not automatic, you know, the old days. Sometimes, you'd lose a lot. Evaporation and spillage. Then, we have to check and all that, too. The most amazing thing. While you having dinner, oh, somebody says, "I want poi." Then you'd run. Then there's a car coming down the service station--a little stand, gas station. Then, you'd fill up (the) poi; you'd never eat your dinner. Your hands would be smelling poi. (Laughs) You got a little gasoline. And later on in the evening, then you have to go and gather the coffee. And grind it late at night. So, I've had all that experience. So, I think it's wonderful because we can recall. Someday, I just would like to sit down. . . .

MK: Record it? So, the Liau family, at one time, was involved in . . .

SL: The Y.K. Aiona Store, yes. In fact, we were the biggest store in Kona. We were the biggest store in Kona. These people from Kainaliu, the--I wouldn't like to use that word, the haoles or these old-time people--they used to come down to our store and buy everything. Also, my mother would go to Honolulu at least once a year. She'll shop for dry goods. She'll go to these Chinese stores; she'll buy clothing. That store contained--we sold shoes, we sold dresses, we sold material, horseshoes, Chinese groceries. Everything you can imagine. Everything (said with emphasis) you can imagine. You know, that background gives me. . . . a nostalgic [feeling]. I get that feeling of going all the way back, you see.

MK: The Liau family was involved in so many different enterprises . . .

SL: At that time. But, later on, I was more involved. I became more and more involved in all these different things. Then, of course, I ran a meat market, and liquor stores, and bars. And I ran apartments.

MK: In that little area of Hookena, were there other families who were involved in businesses?

SL: Well, as I told you, there were just a few Chinese stores, yet. But they didn't do very much, because they were old. It was just a matter earning a living and being in the store all day. But they were not as aggressive as we were.

MK: What were other families in the Hookena area doing?

SL: Fishing. And labor. Construction. They used to work on roads and all--the old roads, county roads. That's about all I can recall. Fishing.

MK: As you mentioned, there were some Chinese there. There were Hawaiians. How about other ethnic groups?

SL: No. There were no Filipinos at the time. No Koreans at the time. There were Chinese and Hawaiians. And no white people--it's very few and far between.

MK: How about Japanese?

SL: Oh, yes. Japanese, indeed, yes. Yes, yes. All these Japanese came, too. I used to go to Japanese[-language] school, too, in those days.

MK: You did?

SL: Japanese[-language] school in Hookena. I think the building is still there. There's a good Japanese[-language] school. It was lot of fun with these Japanese people and these youngsters--classmates. It was lot of fun, because they had their celebrations, and I used to go out with them. So, we knew a lot of them. And a lot became prominent, too. A lot of these Hawaiians, some of them became very prominent.

MK: Can you name some of the people who became very prominent . . .

SL: Yes. The Hayes family, the Kaai family. I wonder if you heard of Homer Hayes? Homer Hayes is quite prominent. And the Amongs. Bill Among was the head of the [state] social services [Department of Social Services and Housing] years back. He was with Burns. They lived right across. There was a Keala family. There was another. . . . Albert Waiau, who composed "Kona Kai O Pua." The Hayes, the Kaais, and quite a few prominent people. In fact, you know, Hookena produced a Miss Hawaii over here, too.

MK: From Hookena?

SL: Uh huh [yes]. That's Rose Poha. Rose Poha, I think, became a Miss Hawaii from there. And another one, too. It's quite amusing.

They had this strip dancer who was very well known in Honolulu. I don't know if you recall. Orchid Kainoa.

MK: She was from Hookena?

SL: Hookena. Orchid Kainoa. Sometimes, I like to tell people about it. They used to come into the store, buy a little crackseed. You know, you look at them, and they just funny little things. But they came up, blossomed out into a Miss Hawaii, stripteasers. And the guys I went swimming with became Rotary Club members. Homer Hayes was a prominent Rotary member. Among, Keala, and quite a few in my area. So, they produced a few.

MK: In Hookena, you mentioned that you went to Japanese-language school.

SL: Oh, yes, I did.

MK: How about the English-language school there?

SL: Oh, yes. Well, I was taught by Mrs. Kaai--Flora Hayes' mother. She [Flora Hayes] used to be a representative in Honolulu. The Hayes family.

MK: What was the name of the school that you went to?

SL: Hookena School.

MK: And whereabouts was it located in Hookena?

SL: It's still there, the old grounds.

MK: Oh, the same one?

SL: Do you remember that? It's on the lower side of the big picket fence there? Yes, it's still there.

MK: And who were your teachers at Hookena Elementary School?

SL: I don't quite remember, but there were a few of them. There were George Apela and one or two others. I don't remember them.

MK: What was taught at Hookena Elementary?

SL: Oh, the basics. I used to walk over. Every morning, we'd walk over to school. It's just about a mile away [from SL's old house].

MK: Did you walk over with a friend?

SL: Oh, yeah, with people. You know how it is. When you come and you stop on the roadside. You pick that <u>'opiuma</u> tree, and you'd pick guava. Like all the youngsters used to come back, get a little

snack on the way home, picking fruits and things like that.

MK: Okay, what sorts of fruits were grown around . . .

SL: Oh, papayas, and mountain apple, and mangoes. They used to have these big mango trees, and they'd throw all the stones. You know, just to see if you can get the ripest one. It's quite amusing. That was quite an interesting childhood. I had a lot of Japanese friends, too. Lots of them and the Hawaiians. In fact, I still recall. You know, they're gradually fading away. I don't know their grandchildren now, but the old people, they all knew us.

MK: What did you do with all your friends when you weren't in school?

SL: [SL misinterprets question.] Well, [I'd] come back during summertime [from Honolulu where I was going to school]. Gradually, we separated, as we matured.

MK: When you were going to elementary school at Hookena, what did you like best about school?

SL: Well, I can't recall. Because we had no definite ambition or looking forward to. . . .

MK: How many years did you go to Hookena?

SL: Only two years, I think. Then, I transferred to Honolulu quite late. I went to Honolulu, maybe, after age of eight or nine. And I had to start all over again. So, graduated late. Because all my uncles, all went to St. Louis [College, currently called St. Louis High School].

MK: Before we get to the time you were at St. Louis, while you were here at Hookena, what kind of chores were you doing?

SL: I don't recall. As any youngster would, just eat and play. Just probably watch the store a little. That's prior (to) going to school, you mean, in Honolulu? That's hard to recall.

MK: You went to Honolulu when you were about . . .

SL: Nine, yes.

MK: . . . nine years old.

SL: That's quite an interesting experience. I went to a boarding school.

MK: What school did you go to?

SL: St. Louis. They called it "college," those days, but it wasn't college. It was St. Louis College. They changed it now to St.

Louis High School. It's quite interesting. I went as a boarder. Didn't know anybody. Because my uncles recommended me. I stayed there about three, four years. That's another. . . . All the anecdotes. Go to a boarding school.

You get out only once a month. Only the first Saturday of the month. You allowed only 50 cents a month to spend. But you had ample amount. Every first Saturday, you allowed to go out. Fifty cents was ample, because the busfare is five cents, one way. Five cents to come back. Then, you go to a movie. That's 10 or 15 (chuckles) cents, 25 cents. Then you buy some candy, or you can go to a little restaurant. You know, sushi was two for nickel or something? You can buy a whole plate of chow fun. Saimin was only ten cents, those days. By the time, your 50 cents. . . . And you buy some candies, a bag of peanuts, or something.

MK: Do you remember how much you had to spend for tuition?

SL: Yes, yes. Even my senior year--graduate in 1928--I only paid ten dollars a month. For boarding tuition. And I was boarding with my aunt. I think my dad would give her about five dollars a month for 30 days.

MK: Why is it that your parents sent you to school in Honolulu?

SL: As I mentioned a while ago, the Chinese wanted their sons and children to get a little better education.

MK: During our education in Honolulu, what was taught to you at the school?

SL: Oh, quite a number of things. St. Louis was also known as one of the best schools there. They were so well known for commercial subjects than the others. In fact, St. Louis produced a number of politicians. There were great politicians, sheriffs, and lawyers, and things like that. They were quite prominent. Because just before you graduate, the business firms would come, and they'd pick out all the students. Who was good, you know. Who was proficient. And they'd have no worry about jobs. No worry. St. Louis was very well known. In those days, St. Louis--even now, I think, too--St. Louis has the discipline, and they were very thorough. Very thorough.

MK: What kind of commercial courses did you take up?

SL: Well, they had the science, too. What you call that, now? Science of liberal arts, or whatever it is. Then, we come to the commercial--typing, shorthand, and bookkeeping, and all of that. I was never interested in bookkeeping and things like that. In fact, I would like to say I was the best shorthand writer. I was the speediest one. Shorthand, I was very good. And I still love it. I still like shorthand.

MK: What was the thing that you disliked the most?

SL: Algebra and geometry. I went through it all right.

MK: Were there other boys who had come from Hookena to go to school at St. Louis?

SL: Not Hookena, but they had a lot from the various islands. From Hilo, from Maui, and Kauai.

MK: Were there others from the Kona area at St. Louis in your time?

SL: Oh, yes. Quite a few here.

MK: Do you remember some of the names?

SL: Do you know this Mr. [Francis] Cushingham?

MK: I've heard of him.

SL: Yes, with the First Hawaiian Bank, he retired. And Joe Duarte. He's from Holualoa. His wife teaches. I think she's retired, now. And a few others. Oh, yes, there're quite a few.

But this boarding life was really interesting. The boarding life, you know, I could talk for pages about it. How we lived. We lived in a dormitory--a big dorm. About 40 or 50 in a big dorm. Of course, it's a parochial school. It's strictly Catholic. They had all these brothers--you know, with their black [attire]. . . . They were all right, but they were very strict. Lot of discipline. Every Sunday afternoon, we'd have to go to church--Catholic services. Every morning, we attended chapel. There were a lot of prayers. Before you enter school in the morning, you'd say a prayer. And prayer again before lunch, prayer again after lunch, (chuckles) prayer again after the school. But I enjoy discipline.

MK: So, when you look back on your St. Louis days, what else do you feel about those days? The boarding experience . . .

SL: Well, not like now. We had no dancing. No girls. No companionship, see, because we didn't have it; unless the other boys had their family. We were away, so we had no contacts. I stayed with my cousins, and there were two girls there. They went to Punahou. But anyway, that was ample. You didn't need too much those days until you came to your senior year. The prom and all--things like that. But otherwise, no. That accounts for the reason they say that when the boys get through, first thing they get out, they all got married.

MK: When you compare your educational experience in Honolulu with some experiences that people in Kona may have experienced . . .

SL: It's completely different. My grandsons have all the advantage. My granddaughter just wrote me a letter. She has all As. She's doing very well. She got a lot of scholarships. She goes to El Camino High School. She got two more years, and she's very anxious to get into UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles]. She wants to be a lawyer. My other grandson, horses is his hobby. So, the father lets him indulge in it. I mean, he's spoiled, but same time, they learning faster than we did. Well, my grandson understand this TV and papers, and everything. They so far advanced than we were.

MK: How do your school days compare with that of your grandchildren?

SL: Vastly different. It's quite interesting, too, about the prices and how we spend. You got away real cheap. Real cheap. Because we were in that area in St. Louis. All the markets were there. And the stores were there. And the restaurants were there. You know, you can eat a whole. . . .

MK: That time when you graduated from St. Louis in . . .

SL: [Nineteen] twenty-eight. Oh, we just celebrated a few [years ago]. . . . Was '78. I was a classmate of Governor Burns--John Burns. I think was about '78--just about a year prior to that, I think--he sent us an invitation. He was the governor then. Got to go down to the Washington Place. He treated us to dinner. I think was a get-together. It wasn't long after that, that he died, you know. He did not graduate with us, but we had him for a few years. He was very nice. We talked about the old school days. We had quite a number. . . .

MK: Did you attend a reunion in 1978 when Governor Burns . . .

SL: Yes. But he wasn't around in '28. When we met him for dinner at Washington Place, I think was '77 or '76. At that time, he sent us an invitation. He treated us very cordially. We recalled old times, so you just don't call him "His Excellency," or "Governor," we'd forget that. . . .

MK: When you graduated, what were your expectations or goals?

SL: At that time, I had no expectations. I had to come back. I worked for the Honolulu Advertiser one year. And I thought it wasn't worthwhile, so I came back. And my father wanted me to run the store there in Hookena.

You know, before I go on any further, in my class, we had quite prominent people that turned out well later on. We had a Supreme Court justice. We had a mortgage banker from the banks, and we had very prominent athletes, too. Very well known in that class. And lot of politicians. It was a very well-known class. We were quite proud of it. Nineteen-eighty, we went down. That was our 50th

anniversary. So, we went to the Blaisdell Center, along with the class of '80. So, we were honored. It was sad. We had only about 17 of us. Quite a number of people didn't bother to show up. I spoke to them. There were only three of us--one from Kauai, one from this island was myself, and one from Maui. They had a dinner that night for us at the clubhouse. Was very nice dinner. Everything--cocktails and all. But only 13 showed up. You know, that was quite sad. I called up others, but they said, "Oh, no. We couldn't come."

But I said, "Look, this is 50 years. We'll never get together. And I'll never see you again." So, gradually they are just fading away, fading away. But I understand the other classes, they usually have three days. They have a picnic; they have an outing or something; then they have a Chinese dinner. Three days.

MK: After you graduated, you had to come to Kona, and you ran your family's store, yeah? What I'll do now is ask you about that family store. Maybe some answers, you may not be able to provide because you didn't actually start the store.

SL: No, I did not.

MK: But I'll try to ask you questions about the family store.

SL: Please do.

MK: Would you have any idea as to how your father started the store?

SL: Well, I think was a small store--a few staples, and gradually added like everything else.

MK: What type of items did it sell, say, when you took over the store?

SL: Groceries, dry goods, piece goods, and things like that. All the regular staple items. Even down to horseshoes and Chinese groceries. Everything in general.

MK: In terms of the physical size of the store, how much was it back in 1928?

SL: Oh, was quite ample for a store. Was quite long. We had a big show window. The store had benches outside. You know, the people used to congregate at night. They wouldn't know where to go. That was sort of a village center. They'd bring their guitars and 'ukuleles, and they'd play their music. We'd small talk and talking story. Chitchatting. And then, we'd go home. On Sundays, we had more people, because the church is right across. Puka'ana Congregational Church was right across there. They'd come over, and before going home--as I said--they'd all line up on the porch. Sit down, chitchat, and go home a little later.

MK: In those days, what were the hours of operation?

SL: Oh, first thing in the morning to late at night. Sundays and all. Day and night.

MK: Can you tell me where the store was located?

SL: Do you know where Leslie's Store is now? Well, right there. That was the part. The store burned down. After we abandoned it and they had some of these indigents--welfare people--runs the store. I think a Korean man carelessly. . . . Leslie's Store was burnt. The whole store was burnt down.

I also operated a bar there. I had the bar. That bar was quite a thing for the community. On Sundays, all these Hawaiians would love to come down and drink beer. That was at about 1932, right up to 1936 when I left.

MK: Going back to the store, why is it that that particular location was chosen?

SL: Well, because, I think, that was quite central for the area, there. When you built a store, other people would build around it.

MK: So, yours was one of the earlier . . .

SL: Earlier stores down there. And one of the largest then, because we had a variety of merchandise.

MK: Do you have any idea of how during those very early days, how your father managed to get the capital to start a store?

SL: Well, he started small, and gradually, like all other stores, they'd save and they'd put it away. Mostly in trade later on. We used to do a lot of trading. Bartering. The Hawaiians had no cash. So, they used to weave lau hala hats. They used to [do] a lot of weaving, lau hala hats. They would bring the lau hala hats, 50 cents apiece. You'd get 10 hats, that's five dollars. Then, they'd buy five dollars worth of groceries. Then we'd trade, you see. They'll buy dry goods and things like that. Now, how did we dispose of those hats? We'd have hats from the floor as high as the ceiling. A whole roomful of it. Maybe a thousand or more sometimes.

MK: That was about 1928 that you were . . .

SL: Yes, 1928, '30, '31, '32. They had no money in those days.

MK: When did that practice end?

SL: Oh, until about the '30s. Early '30s--'32, '34.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: You just mentioned that the Hawaiians had no money. Why is it that they didn't have cash to pay for the items?

SL: Because there were no construction jobs. There were no jobs around there. They were all fishing, mostly. Once in a while, there'd be some county jobs. Then, they get a few dollars. You know, road construction--the county. But there weren't very good roads.

But anyway, how did we dispose of the hats? Those hundreds and hundreds of hats. Well, the big companies would come. American Factors, Von Hamm Young, and [Theo H.] Davies and Company. They would come. These were plantation stores. Then they'd come, and they'd trade. We would trade with them in turn. So, we would buy about $1,000 worth of groceries. We buy as much as we could. They'd bring dry goods--clothing and other things. So, we'd trade. If we had to credit 'em thousand dollars in hats, then we could buy a thousand dollars in their merchandise. Then they take it back to their plantation stores; they sell it to the laborers. And they'd make their profit. They would make their profit, in turn. That is the bartering system. You know, without cash. I think they still do in some countries.

MK: You bartered with the Hawaiians, and then in turn, you bartered the lau hala goods with the larger plantation companies. Were there other items that you exchanged with other people?

SL: No, no. Only these plantation companies. But there was ample cash around, of course. Somehow or the other, there's always ample cash. One way or the other, people have some cash.

MK: How did you get your other merchandise for your store?

SL: Well, I guess, we paid for it in cash, too. Whatever cash. You know, you'd balance. Not everyone strictly bartering, but most of items there [were bartered]. Especially dry goods.

MK: And you said earlier that you got Chinese goods from . . .

SL: Oh, yes, yes. From Honolulu. From my grandfather. There was a variety of Chinese goods.

MK: When you got these Chinese goods, what sort of people bought them?

SL: Well, a few people would buy the staples. Staple items. They'd use some long rice and things like that. But not the kind of exotic foods like we do now. Staple items.

MK: Were non-Chinese here in Kona buying Chinese goods at that time?

SL: Not too many. But they'd buy the few things that they would associate

with. . . . You know, staple items. Oh, we did business with Japanese stores, too. Yeah, they were around. Yes, a few Japanese groceries.

MK: What were the names of the Japanese groceries?

SL: I don't quite remember, but there are a few Japanese. What do they call that? Fukujin-zuke. You know, the cans . . .

MK: Fukujin-zuke?

SL: Yeah, there were a few Japanese pickles, and ume, and all of that, too. You know, for the Japanese around there.

MK: What sorts of customers did you have?

SL: All kinds. The Japanese. And the Hawaiians, more predominantly.

MK: And the Chinese?

SL: Yes, Chinese, in between, a few. Well, it was so competitive, because there were two, three other Chinese stores there, too.

MK: How did you attract business to your store?

SL: I don't know. I think we had more merchandise.

MK: By keeping your store stocked with a greater variety and greater number of goods?

SL: Yes, that's right. Incidentally, to keep the store clean, my mother was so meticulous. Very, very meticulous. And the whole Kona would know that she would be forever scrubbing that store all the time. If you get some of these kama'āinas, they'll tell you that the Aiona Store was the cleanest. She'd scrub the porch and everything. She'd get a few people. They'd be scrubbing that porch. Bringing buckets of water. It was the cleanest floor. In fact, so clean you could sleep on it.

MK: You mentioned that other people would help your mother. How many employees did you have in that store?

SL: Oh, just one or two. Well, we didn't need any outside help to sell. My sister would help, too.

MK: One or two employees?

SL: Yeah, not that many, I think.

MK: What kind of work did the employees you did hire do?

SL: Oh, they'd be scrubbing the place there and do all odds and ends.

MK: But the actual selling would be done by . . .

SL: We. Yes.

MK: At that time, you told me that one means of payment was bartering lau hala hats. How about the other customers? How did they pay for theirs?

SL: Oh, they have a little cash.

MK: Did they pay by coffee, too?

SL: Oh, yes, yes. We used to trade by coffee. That's right. It accumulated. When the harvesting was over, we'd balance out. He gave me so many bags of coffee, and we'd credit you with whatever balance, and we'll pay you in cash. That's right, coffee.

MK: Can you explain that process of how someone would bring their coffee to the stores in town and would pay for their goods?

SL: Oh, yes. That is what we would do. He'd bring the number of coffee. We'd go down to the mill and we'd weigh it. And he'd have a slip of paper. At the end of the harvesting season, we'll take all the slips and we'll match it and say, "Yes, that's right." And we would pay the prevailing price at the time. I don't know how much cherry was. Probably $1.20 a bag or $1.25 a bag. Oh, it was so sad. You know, the price of coffee was, in the depression years, really bad. Coffee was at the lowest ebb. Real low.

MK: How much money would you get, do you think, after all the accounts were settled [at year's end]?

SL: I think a few thousand dollars or so. Not too much. You mean, the net profit? Not too much. I don't think it even go over a thousand. And in those days, a few hundred, almost a thousand, would mean quite a bit.

MK: In those days, how did you extend credit?

SL: Well, we all trust each other. We all had that feeling, but there wasn't anything. And then, we didn't do too much in the big accounts. Cash and carry. But, yes, we did that.

MK: What happened to the bad . . .

SL: Accounts? Well, we would just forget about it. It'd be uncollectable. Just like that. As I was reading in the book there [ESOHP, Stores and Storekeepers of Paia and Puunene, Maui]. Interesting. We all go through the same thing. All these old storekeepers. Whether they be on Maui, or Kauai, or Honolulu. Charge it up to loss.

MK: If a farmer just didn't have enough coffee to pay off his debt, what

did the store do?

SL: Well, you'd get after them. After a while, you actually can't do anything about it.

MK: Would it carry over to the next year?

SL: Oh, yes. If he's still around. If he's still in business. If he's still harvesting coffee or whatever he can produce.

MK: How often did you have a bad account?

SL: When I left the store, we had several thousand dollars or so. My mother could not handle it, so I said, "Well, just forget about it." And someone bought the store. I didn't give them the accounts to collect, because that was all clear. Whoever bought the store later, I gave him a free rein. I said, "You start afresh. And if you charge it, it's just the same thing." I've had the same problem when I ran the bar in Kainaliu. Right here. You know where the Waipuna Lodge [is]? I owned that.

MK: The store was sold, when exactly was that?

SL: Nineteen forty-six. My father passed [away] in '44. My mother just kept it for two years. You know, it was too hard for her to manage. I would have to run down [to family store]. At that time, I moved to Kainaliu in 1938. I started a new store there in 1938. I ran a liquor store there [Kainaliu].

MK: Were there other stores that provided poi and other goods and services like your old family store?

SL: No, no. Well, there was one later on, that came later on. And then, later on, after that, there was a Higashi Poi Factory. You heard about that Higashi Store? Then came the Higashi Poi Factory. There was another poi factory. Do you know Margaret Cagampang?

MK: Yes, she works for a senior citizens' center?

SL: Yeah. Her father ran a poi factory there, too. Oh, yes. Han. Her father [Margaret Cagampang's father] was Korean and her mother was Filipino. So, Margaret is half Korean and Filipino. Oh, [their factory was] not too far. About few hundred feet. Then, about a mile over this way, down Keokea was Higashi Store. Higashi Poi Factory. That Higashi Poi Factory is down at Cho's Poi Factory. They still operating. That Cho family is handling that poi.

MK: What kinds of people bought poi, back then?

SL: Well, naturally, who else?

MK: Mostly Hawaiians?

SL: Uh huh [yes]. Well, that's the staple need. Be interesting to tell you what they buy. Their staple food. There was no such things as bread, or pastries, or anything else. The Hawaiians would buy poi. They would buy raw salmon. We sell (it) in the big barrel for 25 cents a pound. Now, it's six, seven dollars a pound, now. (Laughs) You make a luau, lomi salmon, it's seven dollars and something a pound. We had them in the big barrels. We'd go out and scoop the whole. . . . Oh, it would cost you just a few dollars. Now, it cost you $10, $15, $20. Then, they'd buy condensed milk, which are the cream.

Then, they would buy round crackers--saloon pilot. Those days, the round crackers would cost about one cent apiece. When they come to the store, they want a dollar's worth. So, you have to count a hundred. You buy a package of saloon pilot now, one dozen, (chuckles) I don't know how much you pay. And they'd come in the big box. And sometimes, you get distracted. You come to about 78 or something, you thought it was (laughs). . . . You miscount, you got to start all over again. Yeah, that's quite interesting. I would love to eat the crackers when they first opened. Nice and crisp. And after few days, it gets a little stale. It's not as good.

MK: Were those crackers brought in from Honolulu?

SL: No, from Hilo. Hilo Macaroni [Factory] in Hilo. And they'd ship it by overland. Then they buy shrimps. Oh, shrimps are expensive now. You know, a little ebi? You know, a little package now? They're real expensive. You go to Pay 'N Save or anywhere. Two, three dollars a little--how many ounces? They eat that with Hawaiian salt.

Oh, another thing I was going to tell you. We ran a butchershop, too. Yes, in that period. Yes. I forgot to tell you. We ran the butchershop. We had a lot of pork. We had a piggery.

But, anyway, I'm talking about the store. It's really amazing. I think you have it all down here [ESOHP, Stores and Storekeepers of Paia and Puunene, Maui]. How much they would pay can of salmon, and sardines, and all.

MK: How well did all these businesses do?

SL: Well, fair. You subsisted. In fact, my parents invested in coffee land. This whole area is coffee land.

MK: So, your family had some money to invest in coffee land?

SL: Yes, I mean, if you--not really frugal--but ample, if you set aside. If you're industrious. But I don't think we have that much ambition now. You know, we're spoiled. We always take the easy way out.

MK: You earlier mentioned that your family was in taro . . .

SL: Yeah, taro. We kept some Filipinos and some old Koreans--no. Some old people. Old Chinese. His old friends who just wanted to settle. They planted taro. Then they bring it down on the donkey.

MK: Your father hired them, how did he compensate them?

SL: Yes, he paid them, very likely. And supply them food. Oh, yes, I forgot to tell you, we had a butchershop. Oh, yes, we had the piggery.

MK: Where was the piggery located?

SL: Right below.

MK: Right below the taro?

SL: No. Right on the main road. The old building is still there. It's all torn down now.

MK: Where did you sell the meat that you'd get from the piggery?

SL: My mother used to go out and fill up the orders. She was very industrious. She would work real hard.

MK: You would hire people to work at the piggery?

SL: Oh, yes, yes. We have butchers. In fact, I still have the vat where we boiled that water. The big one out there [outside SL's home]. And I still have the old knives--the butcher knives. It's quite nostalgic, when you start to think about it. So, we had about three, four, five enterprises going at one time sometimes. Oh, butchershop. My old piggery. Kept about 50, 60 pigs at one time.

MK: Were there other piggeries in that Hookena area?

SL: I don't know. But I remember only ours. We were only doing our own. She'd go out, and she'd peddle and fill up the orders. You know, when she goes out, she says, "Oh, I want so much next week." Then, she'd deliver them. She had a great memory.

MK: How far did she go to peddle the meat?

SL: All over. As far as she could to Kealakekua. I ran the Kona Meat Market. That's another phase. Later. And you know what I did? I used to go and peddle meat. My wife used to go and sell also. We get up three [o'clock a.m.]. . . . Oh, that's another phase, too. So, I've been through all of that.

MK: I've got to ask you about that part a little bit later.

SL: Oh, it's interesting. And you ask me about the bar. And you ask me about the coffee.

MK: I'd like to ask you about the bar and coffee, but can I just ask a little bit about the Hookena time?

SL: Yes, let's continue with only one phase of it. Down Hookena.

MK: Your mother took care of the store and butchershop. Your mother would peddle . . .

SL: Peddle and fill up the orders. Oh, she used to make laulau, too. Used to get the Hawaiian ladies and . . . You know, the laulaus? Three for dollar in those days. Big ones.

MK: Was she employing Hawaiian women to help with the laulau?

SL: No, she'd have some Filipinos and some Hawaiians to butcher. They just knew exactly what to do. She would look at the future orders. "Shee, I think we better kill one because we have to fill up this order. So kill a bigger one." So, we had about four, five enterprises going at that time. That really kept us busy. She was industrious. Hardworking woman. She had no education, but she has a wonderful memory. She would go out, and she couldn't write. When she came back, she tells me, "So-and-so pay; so-and-so charge." I would write everything down. Fantastic memory.

MK: Who helped at the service station then?

SL: Oh, well, the service station was just as an accomodation to people.

MK: Were there many cars in Kona at that time?

SL: But we were not in the repairing business. You know, [the service station was] just to fill up gas. We rented the service station there to a Japanese fellow--Yamasaki. Oh, we bought all the [auto] parts. Those days, Ford was the predominant car. Everybody had a Ford--old Model-T's. We'd have the whole room full of parts. So, we supplied him with the parts, the tires. So, later on, when he retired, when he quit, well, we held the bag with all the old parts. We just didn't know what to do. We just junked it.

MK: Back in those days, in one day, how many cars would come by to fill in gas?

SL: There was another station across the street, too. The Fujihara Store. They had a little store across. It was run by a Japanese. Mrs. Leslie's [Hanami Fujihara] father. Down Hookena.

MK: About how many hours did your service station open?

SL: Oh, until we went to bed. If somebody wants to buy poi at 8

o'clock [p.m.] or 9 o'clock [p.m.], we used to open. You know, there was no set time. Accomodation. All day [open]. All the enterprises.

MK: Was pork also available at your store?

SL: Well, only when we selling it fresh, because we had no refrigeration system. We had to get rid of it.

MK: So your family managed all that?

SL: Yes. That's why I said. Your hands would be smelling gasoline, and you go and dig the poi out.

MK: And you also had the coffee business, right?

SL: Yes, coffee business. We'd grind coffee. And used to come in the big vats. That is another story. Big vats. And when he goes in, my father used to wash the coffee. You know, with his foot. Go in and stirring it up. And then, put in the basket, and drying it out on the platform. I have lot of pictures of that. And the old Japanese used to do that, too. All the old Japanese farmers used to do that. I sympathize with those people. When they came about 60, 65, they all had athritis and rheumatism, because their feet was constantly in the water.

MK: Back in those days, what types of people brought in their coffee to your store?

SL: Mostly Japanese.

MK: Were they the people who had accounts with you?

SL: Yes, yes.

MK: About how much business did you have per year with coffee farmers?

SL: I don't quite recall. Because most of the time I was in school. Everywhere was cash and carry. There were no accounting like they do now, where you have to count your expense and everything. You have to be meticulous to keep for the Internal Revenue Service. So there were no such thing. They put their money in the cigar boxes. (Laughs) Well, I can remember my grandfather in Honolulu. He'd have cigar boxes. In those days, they used to trade with gold coins, huh? Underneath the counter. And lucky were my aunts and uncles. Everybody just. . . .

MK: Dip in?

SL: Yeah, dip in and grab a handful of gold coins.

MK: No cash register?

SL: No cash register, those days. Cigar boxes. You put 'em under there. You know, was tricky. You pull out the drawer there. It's quite amusing. Sometimes I'd sit down and just think about all those things. I had a wonderful, varied experience from my life. Yeah, I had a bar. And then, I had apartments. Then, I had the coffee.

MK: Real estate?

SL: Yeah, real estate.

MK: Can we go back a little bit, to coffee, before we get into that phase. People would come in, bring in their coffee. And your father did the grinding?

SL: Grinding everything. Well, he wouldn't actually do the grinding, but we'd have a man grinding. Hawaiian man. Start the engine. Those old days, the gasoline engine, you know? Pour the coffee down the chute, and they'd come in. And next morning, he'd wash it and put it there. We'd go down, and spread the coffee, and dry it up. When it's dry, we had a machine--a parchment machine. Put 'em through the machine, it takes out all that skin. And then, you have to sort it out.

MK: The Hawaiian women?

SL: Yeah, Hawaiian women [would sort coffee]. All sitting there.

MK: About how many Hawaiian women would there be?

SL: All depends on how fast you needed the coffee to be shipped away. We didn't get very much. We get this coffee for Cambron and Company in San Francisco. Imagine, shipping it all the way to San Francisco from here.

Of course, you have the depression years, too. Nineteen twenty-nine, 1928 up to 1934. They were depression years. That's when Roosevelt came in. Oh, they had depression. It was getting so I was so dejected, I just wanted to go out and look for a job sometimes. Boring. And then, later on, it perked up. When I want to get out, my mother and I sat down one evening. I said, "There's a place up in Kainaliu." I said, "Look, we going to go buy it up." That's where it is. We'll come to that. I'll talk the whole business out. Well, we'll stick to Hookena now.

MK: Yes, your father's store in Hookena area . . .

SL: Oh, yeah. That was a gathering place. That was a village center. You know, when you read in the old country stores. The cracker barrel? Places you'd read where all the old-timers would sit there. You still see pictures down old Paia or someplace in Kahuku where they sit outside the old. . . . You know, talk story about

the old times. I used to enjoy that. One thing I regret. I have never learned Hawaiian. My mother was the most fluent person in Hawaiian. Her vocabulary and everything in Hawaiian.

MK: How about your father?

SL: Yes, he would understand a little. But I had all of the opportunity to learn Hawaiian. And over here, I also had all the opportunity of learning Filipino. Because I had, sometimes, about 20, 30 Filipinos working for me. No, I'm not linguistic. You know, the people still remember me all over from there. Honaunau. And all these young Japanese boys, I'm very friendly with them. I still find them very wonderful people. You know, "Hi, hi." He says, "Hi, Sam." I guess, they still recall because I was from there. And here.

Oh, yes. And did you know, on Sundays, we used to make ice cream? (Laughs) We have a barrel, the old ice cream grinder with salt. And they'd make it with strawberry ice cream. We put soda water in just (chuckles) to get the color.

MK: And you would sell the ice cream?

SL: Oh, yeah. After church. It's real interesting. We had that old grinder. We'd just grind it up. Of course, it wasn't as smooth as today's ice cream. We put in the condensed milk and sugar. And the coloring, we didn't have coloring or extract. We put in bottle of strawberry soda. But, you know, they had to do that. There was no electricity. Yeah, '20s and '30s.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 9-63-2-81

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Samuel Liau (SL)

January 30, 1981

Captain Cook, Kona, Hawaii

BY: Michiko Kodama (MK)

MK: Interview with Mr. Sam Liau at his home in Captain Cook, Kona, Hawaii on January 30, 1981.

Mr. Liau, you mentioned that in 1938, you left your family business in Hookena and you started your own business in Kainaliu--a liquor store. I was wondering why you decided to go off on your own at that time.

SL: Well, the area was so small, and there was no potential--no future. And I thought I had to broaden out. I just don't want to be like these old storekeepers, where they just have a little store and they stay there for life. You know, I was quite young, and a little more ambitious, and little more aggressive. I think there were broader horizons, you know--lots to do. That was one of my ambitions.

MK: I was wondering, why did you decide to open it up in Kainaliu?

SL: Because the property was available, see? There was a little spot there. Well, my mother encouraged me. We talked about it. I said, "There's a little spot." So, the next morning, we went out and we got this little place there in Kainaliu. There weren't many stores then in Kainaliu. There was an old, old road, and people used to walk in the middle of the street. It was a little country place. It was sort of a back alley. But now, there's a world of difference. That was in 1938.

MK: Back then, in 1938, what sort of stores were in Kainaliu?

SL: Not too many. Oshima's Store, right now, was there. And the Kimura Store was there. There was a Nakamoto's; they had sewing machine. And a gas station. That was about all. Not too many.

MK: What sort of population lived around that Kainaliu area?

SL: All Japanese. All Japanese merchants.

MK: Were there others?

SL: Oh, yes. The Aloha Theater was there already.

MK: At that time, what kind of movies did the Aloha Theater show?

SL: First run from Honolulu. When I was there, they just had the talkies in at the time.

MK: So, when you opened the liquor store back there in Kainaliu, where did your financing come from?

SL: Well, mostly through credit. The liquor stores trusted me, and they gave me a start. And I built it up.

MK: When you, in turn, sold your liquor to the customers, how did they pay you for the goods they bought?

SL: All by cash.

MK: By cash?

SL: Oh, yes. A few laborers and. . . . It was all by cash.

MK: In those days, what sort of liquor did the customers generally buy?

SL: Oh, they'd buy the usual variety--beer, and wine, and whiskey, and all that. I was the only one there.

MK: Was your liquor store ever a social gathering place for people?

SL: No, no. I started late in '38, and '39 for a while. And came the war [World War II]. Came the war in '41. They closed all the liquor stores up for a while. Oh, for quite some time, I would say. We had small liquor stores throughout, but not too many. There was American Factors in Kailua--the big one. Those aliens that had the little liquor stores were rescinded by the government. They couldn't sell any liquor. So, that left myself and American Factors, see? Non-aliens. So, what I did, I bought out all the small liquor stores throughout there. And I bought out all their liquor.

MK: How was business after you bought all the liquor?

SL: It was through permit. You [i.e., the customer] were allotted only one gallon or one bottle per week. You had to get a permit. They'd bring the permit, and I have to record that. I have to record the sale. Every sale and inventory. Every week or so, I had to take an inventory. I gave it to the Office of [Price Administration]. OPA, they call it. I had to send it in. So, there was no way. . . .

At one time, we had the military. The soldiers came. With two bars going--I also operated the bars same time, too.

MK: How was the patronage?

SL: Oh, we were quite busy because we had the military people there. What they consumed was mostly sake. Sake and pineapple juice. They went wild over it. But it was kind of hazardous, because they would get drunk. What scared me, they used to bring their guns in there, too. They used to bring their guns and rest their guns there while they were drinking. Although we didn't have any accidents or any shooting. They were a nice bunch of fellows. They came from all around the world. All from the different states and all over. We became friendly with quite a few.

So, while the bar was going on, I was also retailing. We had a lot of military people, the officers. They couldn't get the liquor, and they love to drink. They came and they bought the liquor, too. So much for that. So, we kept busy with four outlets.

Then, at the same time, too, I had the Kona Meat Market. That's right. I didn't tell you about the Kona Meat Market. Then, they offered me the Kona Meat Market. That was in 1943, I think. I ran the whole Kona Meat Market.

MK: Where was that located?

SL: You know where the Kona Meat Market is? As you go on the lower side of the road?

MK: Is that near the Greenwell Store?

SL: Yes, yes. Yes, right next. Just there. So, they gave me a lease for as long as I wanted to stay.

MK: Who gave you the lease?

SL: The Greenwell family. So, they offered it to me. It was all right. And then, there was another meat market there, too. Jim Ackerman's. Do you know where Dr. Boone was? Right as you go up that road there. Anyway, I ran my meat market, plus having the four liquor stores. And the same time, in '43, my wife gave birth to twins, these two boys. They kept me pretty busy. So, I ran the meat market. It was quite interesting. We supplied the restaurants and the schools--the cafeterias. The other meat market would take over [i.e., supply the cafeterias] six months, and I would take over the next six months.

MK: How was that arranged?

SL: Well, we had a mutual agreement. So, we'd get a share. He and I were the only two meat markets. And I was [one of] the only two

liquor stores with American Factors and myself. American Factors did not have a bar. They only sold retail. So, I had quite a monopoly, then, see? On the liquor and on the meat market.

MK: When you say that you could supply the restaurants and the cafeterias for six months, was that . . .

SL: No. Not for six months. No, only the schools. Because the schools would buy only hamburger. We'd get up early in the morning, about 1 o'clock, 2 o'clock. Go there and cut hamburger from the cuts of meat, you know, piece of cow. That time, we didn't have any meat cutting machines, too. Everything was done by hand in the '40s, and noboby had any cutting machines. So, I finally got one. So, that made it easy. You just get up early in the morning, about three times--oh, we supplied the orders, too, for meats. Like, we'd go out. I used to peddle. After we get that all packed in the morning, I had a little truck. I filled it up with gas. I covered all of North Kona, all, right down to Kailua. Then, go to South Kona.

And then, there was a little bell on there [the truck] I'd ring, and people would come. The previous week's orders. . . . They gave me an order. Then, I come. I have it all wrapped. Their packages are all placed in the truck. Then, I would give it to them. I say, "Well, here's your order." Fifty cents, or dollar, or something like that. See, we cut up all the meat in the morning. We'd have to cut the meat, package it, put it away. Then, we'd have some more meat in the car--loose meat. Anybody wanted to buy a piece of round, a piece of chuck, we sell it from the [car]. . . . I tell you, meat was really cheap in comparison. A piece of porterhouse was only 35 cents a pound. It's quite interesting. I can write a whole story about the meat market. A whole tongue was only 50 cents. Oxtail, 50 cents. Now, you go and buy an oxtail, it's four, five dollars. The tongue and all that, we used to peddle. When I couldn't peddle--when I had to do something else--she would take the car.

MK: Oh, your wife?

SL: Yes. She would take the car. She'd go out and peddle. This would take a whole day's work. And I had two Filipinos. There were no wage control then--salary control. The Filipinos were only getting 27 cents an hour. (Laughs) It's really interesting. A T-bone steak would only cost 30 cents a pound. Hamburger was only 15 to 20 cents. Imagine. I could write a whole history on it. So, we'd go and peddle. We go around, and we have customers. I had only two Filipinos and myself.

MK: You did all the work with the two Filipinos?

SL: Yes. I went in, in the morning. So, I would go early in the morning. And then, we'd have to wash the place, scrub the place. Go in and

out of the freezer. And I have to sell the meat and all. Just the two Filipinos and myself. And they would do all the chopping and all the cutting. The ranch would supply me with the beef, as much as I wanted. I can't tell you the volume of meat. But we have the choice of eating the choicest meat all the time. And did you know, they had an OPA [Office of Price Administration], then? Control. You could not black market your meat. If that piece of meat, you originally listed for so much, you couldn't go any higher. And the liquor was also at that price, too--at the set price. You couldn't go above, see? And you couldn't sell any more than that. Continuing further, one time, I had 2,000 gallons of sake.

MK: How did you get sake?

SL: My whole bedroom was filled with that. We were selling the sake for only $1.75 a gallon. I could have sold that, during the war years, for $20 a gallon. I could have black market, and I could have made a fortune out of that. I could have made a fortune, but you could not, see? There were a lot of people that did that, but they got caught eventually. Then, they got slapped heavy by the Internal Revenue. I had all the chances.

Oh, how did I get the sake? I wrote to all the breweries. And they'll give me all I wanted. I had some contact, too. Also, I had contacts with the big liquor firms that wholesaled, and I had some friends in there, too. So, I got all I wanted, as much as I wanted. All the choice liquors. I had all the opportunity, but I didn't have much foresight.

Then, I had an old store down in Hookena--where my old store was. My mother helped me out. I bought an icebox, and she helped me to sell some of the meat down in that area, too. Not the good choices of meat, but I'd send her the meats. The people down there. . . . Because nobody would buy porterhouse and T-bones and sirloins. So, she helped me to sell some meat down there. I had this market going. It was quite interesting. And I got all the pork I wanted.

MK: I remember, your family had a piggery?

SL: A piggery, yeah. After that, yes. And we get all the pork and we have all the meat we want. I was eating--you know, getting all the choice. Once in a while, some of those Hilo restaurants would come over, and they'd ask me for some meat. For some loins, and T-bones, and all. So, they'd come over, and they'd buy from me.

And then, the military in Waimea--Pohakuloa, I think so. They were tired of eating lamb. They could get loads of lamb. So, they come over. They said, for instance, "If I sell you some lamb, could we get some meat?" So, I did that. Oh, it was quite interesting transactions, you know. I could write a story on Hookena and the old Hawaiian trading, and the meat trading, and the liquor, and everything.

So, after a while, I think was three years later, I was beginning to get arthritis. My knees and all. Because I was constantly in cold water all the time. You sell a piece of meat, you be washing your hands. It's not like these days, where it was all wrapped, and priced, and everything. You have to cut it on the tray in the icebox. Then, in the morning, about 1:30 in the morning, I used to get up and cut hamburger. Then, I have to help them to wash it, and constantly washing my hands. So, I begin to develop arthritis. I told the owners, see, I was going to give it up. I gave it up in '45 or something. No, in '46 or something like that. After three years of it, see. So, I thought, well, I've just had enough of it.

MK: Were the Greenwells supplying you with the meat that you sold?

SL: Oh, yes. Oh, the Greenwell Ranch is tremendous. All the meat. I don't know how many heads I have. I wish I kept the records. All I wanted. As much as I can sell, they would supply me. I just put an order. I would say, "Well, I want so many heads this week."

And they say, "Okay. We'll butcher it for you. And how many hogs do you want? We'll butcher it for you." That was unlimited. Unlimited.

MK: How were the wholesale prices?

SL: Well, the wholesale prices was us. I used to supply Rose Chong--you know, the Oceanview Restaurant? And Konawaena School, Napoopoo School, Hookena--all the schools, for that matter. We used to take hamburger. Because that was the only thing that they had those days that they ate. Was hamburger. So, one day, the two Filipinos were not happy with their salaries, so they strike. They said, "Eh, boss, you know, we only getting so much."

So, one morning, they left me flat, high and dry. They left everything there. The schools have to be met at 7 o'clock [a.m.], because they have to get their hamburgers all ready. I had to call my wife early in the morning to come down there. We would cut hamburger just for that, see? Finally, I gave them a raise in salary. Oh, was really cheap. Everything was cheap. I couldn't blame them, you know. So, I gave them a raise, and everything went back to normal. But just that morning, I can visualize it, that I had to call my wife to come down and cut hamburger. Twice, I think. Then, I do the meat cutting myself.

MK: In those days, did most families have refrigeration?

SL: No, no, I don't think so. Not much freezers then, at that time, 1945. Freezers were quite new, I think.

MK: How did you keep your meat?

SL: We had a chill box. A big chill box. No refrigeration--big ice-

box. Well, everybody had iceboxes. That's right. Excuse me. Everybody had icebox, but not freezers too much, I think.

MK: I'm wondering, how did you manage running the meat market and your bars at the same time?

SL: Yeah, I did. I did manage.

MK: How did you manage to allocate your time?

SL: There was no such thing as time. Just go on, and on, and on. Well, I was young and vigorous. My wife was very ambitious. She was very helpful. At the same time, she was raising the two boys--twins. I had the twins. The boys were born in '43. Just at that same time. Up the hospital, she called me up one morning. I was really working or something, I was home. She said, "Oh, you're having twins." (Laughs) After that, I was kind of busy. So, we had our own personal life right then and there, too. She had to feed the babies. But fortunately, I had maids. And I had bartenders. So, that wasn't too bad. But I had to manage it, too. So, it was quite profitable, then. And then, right then and there, in '46, I bought almost half of Kainaliu village.

MK: What part of Kainaliu did you buy?

SL: The whole opposite side of the street.

MK: The ma uka side of Kainaliu?

SL: Yeah, yeah. Five hundred feet.

MK: From what area to what area?

SL: You know where, where there's a Christian resource center? From that point, go right through to. . . . You know where they go up? Where they have to go into the parking lot? Right there. That whole side of the street.

MK: How did you manage that parcel of land?

SL: I bought two parcels in June, 1946, one time. I paid cash for it.

MK: Can I ask how much?

SL: No, I don't want to divulge that, but I bought that one time.

MK: Fee simple?

SL: Fee simple. Without batting an eyelash, I bought it. So, I was quite enterprising, those days. I wish I had that yet. But I wouldn't give yet, because I'm still developing eight more lots, and that's worth . . .

MK: Back in that year, who did you buy the land from?

SL: I bought 'em from the Paris estate. And I bought that from somebody else in Kailua.

MK: Why were they letting go of the land then?

SL: I don't know why. I have my regrets, too. I made a lot of foolish moves, which I shouldn't have done. I sold it [land] down in Kailua. I could have been worth a million dollars today, a million dollars today. But I have no regrets. I lived well. I have no regrets, because I have another part. And then, I didn't do anything. I dropped everything. I mean, these enterprises. Then, I went on to art. I stayed quite a bit on the Mainland. After all these things, then I felt, well, [there] was time to devote to what I like--my hobby.

MK: But before you went into art, I remember, you were telling me, that back in 1948, you opened the Hoonanea Apartments? Can you explain how you did that?

SL: Yes. I had this piece of land down there, right next to the Hilton. That's the one I bought in Kailua. I opened it up. Oh, the plane service were not in, yet. There were no airplanes coming in. There was no water. The planes to Kailua came in only in about 1950. That's when they opened up the airport in Kailua. The Kona Inn was the only hotel. The only restaurant there was Oceanview Restaurant. It was an old street, dirt street, in the Kailua village. Now, look at Kailua, see? So, I have a lot of experience along this Kona coast. We used to go, and you could just walk in the middle of the street there. They'll be no cars and everything in Kailua.

I wanted to buy more land, then. I went around buying land, but nobody want to sell some land. I put some money down. I went to Honolulu, got an attorney. I wanted to buy a nice piece of land--a choice piece of land. But these Hawaiian lands were all entangled. And the lawyer said, "No, I have to refund you. Because you going to spend more money than the piece of land." I found out later that was not so. I could have owned the whole choice block in Kailua today. I was quite ambitious in buying land, too. I went around. Sometimes, I look back, and I say, "You know, if I was more aggressive, I could have gone from place, to place, to place, look at the maps, and buy up all the little lots." Here and there, I could have been. . . . But even presently, the wife chides me. She says, "You know, you should have bought more lands."

But I said, "Well, I don't know." Because I had too much already. I had from Kealia; I had Honaunau. I owned quite a bit of land, about 10 parcels, and even here with 50 acres. Almost 50 acres here, see?

MK: What motivated you to buy land in Kailua back in 1950?

SL: Because it was available. There was a piece there. Oh, she [SL's wife] wanted a beach home. You know, right on the beach. But that place is rocky. The soil, there's no sand there. That was right next to the Hilton. Right now, every time I pass there, I regret. Every time I go to the Hilton for dinner, and look at it. But, you know, that's water under the bridge. So, you just cannot regret. And I had other enterprises here. For instance, like this here [near SL's home in Captain Cook], well, I'm at this age. I'm quite late now. I got eight lots to come. That is worth considerable money. Choice land. At the price they're paying, it's quite a bit. So, what I'm doing right now, I'm devoting more time to studying local papers, and looking at all the real estate sections--how much they're selling it for and this and that. So, I go back now and study all the land values, which I didn't before.

MK: How did you buy land back in the 1950s, then? Did you just visit people and ask about the land?

SL: No, it was my cash. It was my own cash. I said, well, I just had about enough of it. So, then, that's why I went back to art. So, I went to New York.

MK: Before we get into that story, I want to know a little bit more about the Hoonanea Apartments.

SL: Oh, yes. Well, the Hoonanea was three units. I have the pictures there. They're beautiful. That was done by Vladimir Ossipoff, one of the best architects in the islands. He still is. Now, you can't get him. Because he designs homes for millionaires, all these millionaires. He designs homes for Waialae Iki and all those big homes in Diamond Head now. When he builds, he builds these million dollar homes. But I got him, and I got beautiful pictures. People used to come, and they'd copy the design. He and I are still good friends right now. In building, I always want to get the best. This home was designed by an architect, too. I mean, you can see it. There's not many homes like this. Not many home designs. I always try to get the best. It pays.

I had very good clientele. As I said, I had lot of Honolulu people come. Restauranteurs. I had Don the Beachcomber; I had Canlis. You know, Pete Canlis, Honolulu. And they used to come. They wouldn't eat in a restaurant. They go home and they cook. (Chuckles) And then, I had one of the Gimbels of New York. Gimbels Store in New York. Oh, I had the two restauranteurs in Honolulu, and quite a few actors and actresses. They would come. They seemed to like it. It was well built and suit their convenience. Because they didn't like the hotel. They want the leisurely life there. Just that. So, I had good clientele. I wish I had kept that book [i.e., room registration book]. I don't know where we misplaced (it). Henry Fonda, and quite a few actresses, and the people from Honolulu,

famous restaurants.

MK: At that time, what other hotels were available for tourists who came into that Kailua area?

SL: Only the Kona Inn. And then, there was another one later. He [person not identified] came in. He took a little share, but he was not as elaborate as mine. There was no water, then. There was no water system. Oh, it was quite expensive to put these things--water, and heater. All the excavations, see? But fortunate, labor was cheap. Labor was cheap. You could get 75 [cents] to a dollar an hour, labor. When they built a stone wall was only dollar. But now, they're asking for 10, 15 dollars an hour. So, labor was cheap. So, that compromised that. In fact, should you go down the Hilton right now, there's a lot of things left over from my building. The stone wall, and I had a barbecue grill. A nice, big barbecue grill there. They're still using it for a bar. I go there. It's kind of heartbreaking. I mean, to look at it. The slab is there; the bar is there. So, from the meat markets and the bars, and going to there. Well, we haven't come to Central America, yet.

MK: So, those apartments, how were they managed?

SL: She [SL's wife] and I. We did all the cleaning. We had no maids, so we just took down our maids sometimes. We did all the cleaning. She did all the cleaning. She'd even do all the laundry. I think we wore out about three, four washing machines. They bring up the laundry. She did all the laundry. Holidays were the days that were really busy, because they'd come over on weekends. So, we didn't have much holidays. New Year's Day, Christmas Day, all these holidays, we used to work. So, finally, she complained. She says, "Oh, I'm not going to. . . . Let's just sell it. I can't stand it anymore." [Later] she said, "Shee, we shouldn't have sold it."

I said, "You could have been. . . ."

MK: What year did you sell it in?

SL: In 1956.

MK: And that same year, you went into coffee production?

SL: Yeah, when I came back.

MK: Why did you go into coffee production?

SL: Because I had the land here.

MK: Your 50 acres that your parents . . .

SL: Yes, 50 acres. And also, everybody was working on coffee. Coffee

is real cheap then, see? You know Baron Goto? Then, I went into coffee.

MK: Baron Goto encouraged you to go into coffee?

SL: Well, he gave me ideas. He encouraged people to go back to coffee. So, I sort of got inspired, and people got inspired. They were planting and buying plants, and everything. One little coffee plant would be 20, 25 cents. We'd have so many, and we'd sell some of those. People were planting like mad.

MK: Were you selling any of those seedlings?

SL: Oh, yes. I was selling seedlings, too. Prior to this, down in Hookena, I was in the coffee business already. So, I knew quite a bit about coffee. I have a bunch of men. I'd go out and I'd install--I put in a lot of money in equipment.

MK: What kind of equipment?

SL: Oh, pumps and sprays, and hoses, and things like that. In fact, I was getting it modernized. Everything was modern. I believe in that, see?

MK: In those days, were you actually working in the fields?

SL: No, I was not actually working in the fields. But I come up in the morning, and take a little jeep, and go around, and pick up all the coffee. I had pickers. I had about 20 pickers. We'd bring down about 200 bags--almost 200 bags--of cherry coffee a day. I'd go up, and I'd take a man with me. I go and I just make all the rounds. He put the coffee on, and we'll have a place there where we stack it up. The American Factors or Captain Cook [Coffee Company] would come and pick it up. So, I had quite [a lot of] that experience. I had pruning and fertilizing. Once in a while, I'd go out and supervise the fertilizing. And the pruning, you know, get all these Filipinos to prune twice a year. Oh, it's a tremendous job. Coffee is a tremendous job. It's not as easy as you think it is. It's not as easy--just like macadamia nuts, now, I think. But it wasn't as easy. So, that's another experience that I have had.

MK: You mentioned you had 20 pickers.

SL: A day.

MK: How did you find these pickers?

SL: Oh, they'd come, and I'd get them. They were mostly Filipinos, and a few Hawaiians and other people.

MK: What were the rates of pay back then?

SL: Oh, was very cheap. Dollar and something a bag. Every week or so, I'd pay them cash. You know, they'd come and I'd give 'em a check or. . . . I'd pay them off after a week. We'd count how many bags you picked. And then, if I didn't have the money, then I go to American Factors or Captain Cook [Coffee Company], and they would advance me so much for the payment of that. And after, I sold the coffee. But in the meantime, remember, you had to buy fertilizer and you had to pay labor. So, it wasn't too encouraging right then and there. Then, I took a trip with a few others.

MK: Oh, before you go into that trip, I was wondering, what else did you provide to the workers besides the pay?

SL: I gave them some lodgings. The few houses I had. They had lodging there. It was mostly Filipinos. But the other families, well, they had their own houses, and they'd come and pick.

MK: You mentioned that, say, about 1957, you visited coffee lands in Central America?

SL: Central America. I went to San Salvador. I went with Noguchi. You know, from Captain Cook, Pacific [Coffee Cooperative]. And a few others, Ouye, and about eight of us, I think, from here. We certainly did have the VIP treatment. That was my choice of going down. I think, "Gee, I better join the group." Also for sightseeing and all, but [also] to learn about coffee. I was still in the midst of coffee. But when I came down, I became a little discouraged. I said, "You know, we're just one coffee bean in the whole. . . ." (Laughs) You can't compete with them. Labor is cheap.

That is another story. The living conditions. That's why Nicaragua, San Salvador, the inequities of life over there, the people. That's why, the peasants and the people are always having these revolutions. That's the cause of that. It's really black and white. The rich are the very richest, and the poor are the very poorest. There's no in-between there. That's what is causing all these riots and killings. See, the people are unhappy. And the communists got in, too. So, every time I page that [i.e., look through the newspapers], I see San Salvador, where they killed these nurses. I see the pictures. So, Santa Ana is the capital. I've been there, but in Guatemala, no.

MK: So, you went to those countries. You saw the coffee land . . .

SL: Oh, yes. And the history, the background. And the palatial homes that they had, because we had the VIP treatment. It was quite interesting, and I have no regrets on that trip. I have no regrets because of . . .

MK: How did that trip affect your own coffee growing?

SL: Well, when I came back, I said, there was no chances of slaving

on. . . . You know, going and going and going without any [profit]. . . . Everything was so tight here. The prices weren't so good, and then it was just dropping. So, I thought, it was best to give it up completely.

MK: So, when you say you gave it up completely, what do you mean? Did you get rid of the land?

SL: No, no. I still had the land. I had all of the land. But I didn't cultivate anymore, or have pickers, or anything. I just let it go. It wasn't worth it. I used to clean up all the whole land. I was too meticulous. Cleaning up all the place there, which was not essential. Cutting all this and that. So, I left the land as is.

MK: Then, in about 1960, you mentioned that you also stopped the liquor business?

SL: Yes. Yes, I also gave that up.

MK: Why did you give that up?

SL: Well, it was unprofitable then. There's a lot of facts I just don't want to mention. You know, about having employees and things like that.

MK: So, it was unprofitable, so you . . .

SL: I thought it was not profitable. When things get too unprofitable, it's just not [worth] hanging on for life just to say I have a business, uh uh [no].

MK: And that was the year that you took up your artwork?

SL: Yeah. And I said, "I better get away for a while," and travelled.

MK: You stayed in New York for four months?

SL: Yeah, four, five months. New York. I covered New York pretty well. I've seen New York from A to Z. That was my third trip to New York, I think.

MK: And then, a few years later, you mentioned that you went into subdividing. Could you explain where you did the subdividing?

SL: Oh, then I sold some of the land in Kainaliu, too, a few pieces. I sold that portion to that Rev. Matsuura. He used to be in Daifukuji. I sold a little portion to him. That's where the Ben Franklin is, I think. (Phrase inaudible.) And I just sold that portion. I don't know why I needed to. That's another regret now. But at that time, my boys were going to college. Oh, tremendous. . . .

MK: Expense?

SL: Expensive. So, I had to do that. So, I came back, and I opened this subdivision below here.

MK: Right below your house in Captain Cook area?

SL: Yeah. This is the road, and there's another portion down there. There are a few houses down there now. That was in about 1960, I think, too.

MK: You mentioned that you opened up eight lots, and you sold those eight lots?

SL: Yes. Then, I opened up another eight lots here. (It is called "Kalamalani.")

MK: In 1965?

SL: Yeah.

MK: How was real estate back then in the early 1960s?

SL: Poor. I regret. I should have waited. It was too early and too little. People didn't have money, and real estate was real cheap. In fact, it was a bargain. Now, you could have made your money. But if I had kept it, I would have been all right. If I had kept it, it would have been better. But you couldn't though, because, now, all sorts of ordinances have come. You have to put sidewalks, you have to put lights, and you have to put everything. But I did put the water and everything. I was on the roadside, so it wasn't too bad. So, it was easy to obtain.

MK: Oh, back in the 1960s?

SL: Yeah, it was easy to get approval for a subdivision. There was no problem. But now, we're hitting a snag. You know why? Because of all these bureaucrats in the county.

MK: You mentioned that you're now trying to subdivide even more land, but the zoning of the land is agricultural, so the problem . . .

SL: Yeah. Zoning and all that, too, is a problem. But I'll just wait. Now, there's no hurry. I have eight very choice lots, and that should make up for everything.

MK: What gave you the motivation to go into this real estate--the subdividing of land and the selling of land?

SL: I bought a lot there in Sunset, too. I gave it to my boys already. Those are very choice. So, what I intend to do, I intend to give it to my family first. And the rest, I can use it and provide for

my wife for her retirement. There's that saying, "You can't take it with you," so might as well use it. Otherwise, you have to have your inheritance tax. It's going to be terrible. So, I can use a portion of that, sell it, and travel again, leisurely. See, I don't do anything now. I haven't done anything. I retired since about 1960. I've retired about--oh, for a good while--about 20 years. I've never had an employer.

MK: You've been a businessman all the way through?

SL: Yeah, I have never worked for anybody in my life.

MK: Why is that?

SL: Well, it's just my nature. That's why my wife chides me all the time. Even at home, she says, "You know, you too darn independent."

MK: You've lived in Kona for the bulk of your life. I know that you've gone through a lot of changes. I was wondering, as you look back through the years, what were the major changes in the Kona area?

SL: Tremendous . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: You were saying that the changes in Kona were tremendous. What were the major changes, in your opinion? From the time you were in Hookena till now?

SL: Well, new people. New zoning and people. Often when we go to parties now--I been to, oh, quite a number of parties--and all foreigners to me. You go there completely as a stranger. You know the people, they invite you. But it's not the same type of people. It's a funny thing in Kona, when the locals get together, it's all locals. Not too many outsiders. When it's outsiders, it's a different type of people again. Your social life, I mean.

MK: What type of people? How has the population changed?

SL: Well, the older people are all going. You know, the old type of people that we used to go with, although we mingle with a lot of the younger people, too. Fortunately, I know quite a bit of Hawaiians; I know lot of the Japanese; I know lot of Filipinos. That made life interesting for me, because I've known them. I recollect, and they always remember me. Then, I know the Filipinos. And we have lot of Japanese, too. In Kainaliu, we belong in the kumi. See, I was kumi chō for two times. And a lot of the Japanese,

and a lot of white people. Because we mix socially, too. Because we entertain, too. So, I have a variety of people and life was never dull for us. If you meet one type of people, they just one type of people. But anywhere we go, we can go to a Japanese party, we know practically everybody. We can go to a Hawaiian party, whether it's Kailua, or whether it's Hookena, or anywhere. It's so cosmopolitan. That's one phase that I really like.

I was in the Rotary Club. I started the Lion's Club here. I was a charter member of the Lion's Club, the original Lion's Club. And I was also a charter member of the Rotary Club. So, I got drawn in too, so my association is quite large yet. They got me, but I withdrew because I thought I would like to devote more time to myself to reading. I love to read and write. If I can write, too, sometimes, I just like to. Have you read all of that thing?

MK: The China article? Mm hmm [yes.]. I found that interesting. And your cartoons, they've been coming out in the newspapers.

SL: Yes. I have lot of cartoons. I have a whole big batch that I did all throughout these years. If I feel like it, if I have the urge, I'll do it. But I don't want to be controversial. I don't take any sides. But the cartooning, I like to get the facts, and people seem to like that. Have you seen some of the local cartoons that I have?

MK: I've seen some of your work. I remember the one that you did on the "Shōgun."

SL: Yes. (Laughs) I still have the originals. I took watercolors. I even went to San Francisco to study two years ago.

MK: I remember that you were once taking calligraphy lessons during your free time here?

SL: Yeah, I still do. I did. I'm waiting for the sumi, you know? I did that. I'd like to get back to it. I think my hands are gone already. It takes time and patience to get back again. But I'm so involved in too many things right now.

MK: As my last question for today, in retrospect, what do you think about your life in Kona?

SL: I was born here, raised here. I think it was interesting. I have no regrets. I did the things I wanted. Since I'm retired now, I just don't want to go anywhere. Besides, I've travelled. That is a tremendous help. Your life is never dull. You can turn the page of that magazine, and the wife says, "Oh, we've been here." Did you know, the other day, the big earthquake in Italy, where Pompeii was in ruins? We could still see the buildings [when SL visited Italy]. I said, "You know, we walked there in Pompeii." As I said, in San Salvador, and whether it was Mexico, or Antigua

Guatamala, or anywhere else,there's always something that has connection. And China, you know when we read about this Mao Tse-Tung's widow?

MK: Being on trial?

SL: Yeah, being on trial. And the buildings and things like that. Travelling gives you wonderful memories. I satisfied myself by going to Rome. Michelangelo, and Leonardo Da Vinci. I had my satisfaction seeing all those artworks. Going to Florence, and going to Paris. I've been to London twice. I've been to Westminster Abbey two times, St. Paul's Cathedral, Notre Dame. You know, you store up a lot of memories. Although I spent considerable sum of money and went into the Mediterranean; we covered all the Greek islands. Looked at the Parthenon and all these buildings. It's quite interesting. The wife and I, we talk about it sometimes. So, I think I had a full life. And all the remaining years, I was just thinking, it's just that, see.

And I love to cook. I like to do all the gourmet foods and exotic foods. I eat in the best places, and I've travelled all around the world, too. I've been to Hong Kong twice. To Chinese restaurants all over the world. To Vancouver, and all these Chinese places. So my life isn't dull. In fact, I do most of the cooking. I'm always poring over cookbooks. I like to experiment . . .

MK: Life has become. . . .

SL: Full to me. I don't think there's anything else. The children are all right. The boys are all right. I have a granddaughter. She's 16. And three grandsons. So, what more is there. Well, you might be a little shy of [cash]. . . . You know, with rising prices and things, but you just make the best of it, see? My wife does her own work and she is happy. She has the garden. In fact, sometimes, I don't have enough time during the day to do the things I want. Really. So, I've been through (it) all. . . . I had quite a life.

I had never worked for somebody. If I had worked for the county and all, I would have had a straight life and retire at 65, get my pension and social security, but if not, all those intervening years, I've done a lot. I think I had a full life. And I'm not even through, yet. Now, I have to hustle and fight. . . . Not fight, but I have to work it out now. I get the surveyor, and the plans are all finished. It's quite interesting. You know, the big plans. The lots are half an acre.

MK: What area will that new subdivision be located in?

SL: Right here. All on this side.

MK: Captain Cook ma uka?

SL: No. On this side of the house here. Beautiful sites.

MK: And those will all be residential plots?

SL: Yes, all residential. There're about half an acre [lots].

MK: So far, the buyers of your plots, have they been local people or people have come . . .

SL: Well, down here is local.

MK: Down here, the early subdivisions were local?

SL: Yes, local. But the other ones, I don't know. I think, well, maybe some Japanese might be interested. So, I'm working on it. Now, I'm studying on the prices of land. Oh, it's horrendous over here. Terrible, the prices are.

MK: What do you think the future will hold for Kona, especially the whole ma uka areas?

SL: I think it's opening up now. But the average person can't pay you 20, 30, 40,000 dollars for a piece of land. They just can't do it. They just can't. In the old days, you could buy it for a song. As I just said, I should have accumulated more, but you have so much and you just feel. . . . You know, you got to let the others do it, see? When you buying land, there's an axiom. It says, "Buy the sky and buy the ocean." Any time you have a piece of land on the ocean, it's good. And when you buy the sky, you have all the landscaping.

MK: I guess, here, you do have the sky?

SL: Yeah, I have the sky and the ocean. I think that's enough already.

MK: I'll end the interview here.

SL: Thank you very much.

MK: Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW

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Volume I

ETHNIC STUDIES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Ethnic Studies Program
University of Hawaii, Manoa

JUNE 1981